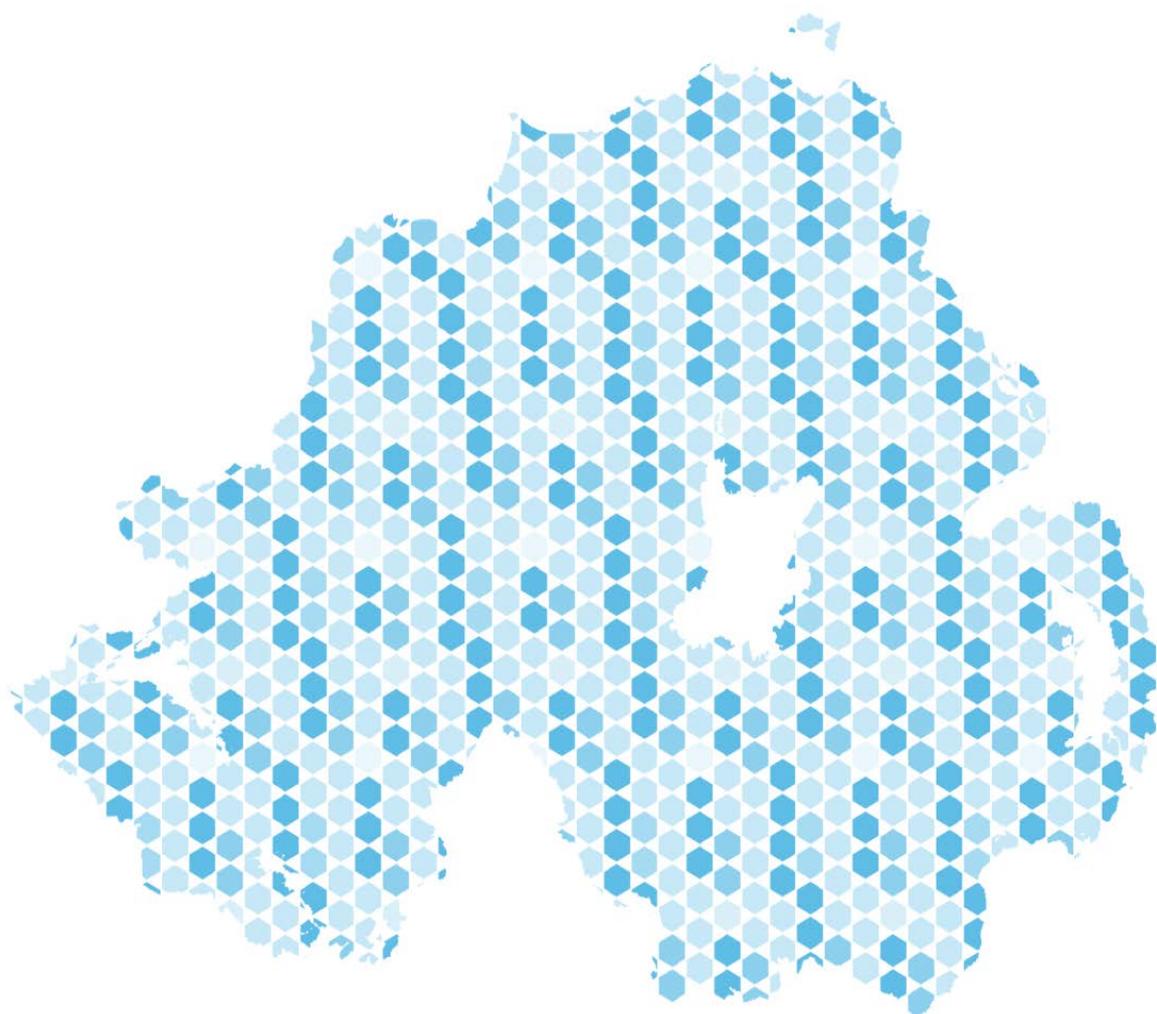


# PRIMARY INSPECTION



Education and Training  
Inspectorate

Bushvalley Primary School,  
Ballymoney

Report of an Inspection  
in November 2012



Providing Inspection Services for  
Department of Education  
Department for Employment and Learning  
Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure

CUSTOMER  
SERVICE  
EXCELLENCE



## CONTENTS

<b>Section</b>		<b>Page</b>
1.	School Context	1
2.	Focus of inspection and overall finding	1
3.	Achievements and standards	1
4.	Provision for learning	2
5.	Leadership and management	3
6.	Summary of questionnaire responses	4
	Appendix - Accommodation	

## Inspection methods and evidence base

The inspection evaluations are based on evidence gained from lesson observations, from scrutiny of the children's completed written work and from a range of documentation including the school's internal performance data. In addition, the inspection team held discussions with groups of the children, with teaching and non-teaching staff and with representatives from the Board of Governors.

The views of the parents, teaching and non-teaching staff were sought through a confidential questionnaire prior to the inspection. The reporting inspector discussed any issues raised through the questionnaires with the principal and the governors. A summary of the outcomes from the questionnaires is included in section 6 of the report.

## Quantitative terms

In this report, proportions may be described as percentages, common fractions and in more general quantitative terms. Where more general terms are used, they should be interpreted as follows:

Almost/nearly all	-	more than 90%
Most	-	75%-90%
A majority	-	50%-74%
A significant minority	-	30%-49%
A minority	-	10%-29%
Very few/a small number	-	less than 10%

In assessing the various features of the provision, Inspectors relate their evaluations to six descriptors as set out below:

DESCRIPTOR
Outstanding
Very Good
Good
Satisfactory
Inadequate
Unsatisfactory

## 1. School context

Bushvalley Primary School is situated on the Ballinlea Road, Stranocum, Ballymoney, County Antrim. The enrolment has remained relatively stable over the past five years, being 154 in 2008 and currently 145 children. At the time of the inspection, 21% of the children were entitled to free school meals and 23% were identified as requiring help with aspects of their learning.

## 2. Focus of inspection and overall finding

The inspection focused on:

- the children's achievements and standards in literacy and numeracy, in particular, how the school is addressing low attainment and under-achievement, where applicable;
- the quality of provision for learning; and
- the quality of leadership and management.

In addition, the use of information and communication technology (ICT) to support learning, and the school's arrangements for pastoral care, including child protection, were evaluated.

### OVERALL FINDING OF THE INSPECTION

In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this school is very good. The school is meeting very effectively the educational and pastoral needs of the children; and has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.

#### Summary of key findings

Achievements and standards	Very good
Quality of provision	Very good
Leadership and management	Very good

### KEY FINDINGS OF THE INSPECTION

## 3. Achievements and standards

**The quality of the children's achievements and standards is very good.**

- Almost all of the children work very well in class, demonstrating high levels of motivation and perseverance in their work; they have a positive attitude to their learning. From the beginning of the foundation stage, the children work effectively both independently and collaboratively in pairs and in groups. By the end of key stage (KS) 2, the children apply effectively their thinking skills and problem-solving capabilities to a range of learning activities.

- An analysis of the end of key stage (KS) 2 assessment data for English and mathematics shows a consistent improvement in standards over the last four years. In both English and mathematics the school's performance is above the Northern Ireland (NI) average. When compared with schools in the same free school meals category, the levels of attainment in English and mathematics are well above the NI average in three out of the four years\*.
- The school's internal performance data shows that almost all of the children make very good progress in English and mathematics in line with their ability or above expectation. Across all key stages, the children develop good skills in talking, listening, reading and writing in meaningful contexts. By the end of key stage (KS) 2, almost all of the children are confident and articulate, present their written work to a high standard and can read at a level commensurate with their age. In mathematics, almost all of the children have a very good knowledge and understanding of place value, measures, data handling and shape and space.
- The school's assessment data demonstrates that nearly all of the children requiring additional support make very good progress and are achieving in line with their ability.
- By the end of KS2, the children achieve very good standards in information and communication technology (ICT).

#### 4. **Provision for learning**

**The quality of the provision for learning is very good.**

- The teachers' planning is very effective. The medium and long-term planning provides a clear overview in English and mathematics to ensure continuity and progression in the children's learning. The teachers' evaluations of the planning reflect the children's responses and are used well to inform future learning and teaching. They plan for the integration of, and, make very good use of ICT to support the children in their learning in both literacy and numeracy.
- Almost all of the teaching is good or better; in a majority of the lessons observed, it was very good and outstanding. In the most effective lessons, the work is well paced, matches closely the needs and abilities of the children within the class and includes appropriate challenge for the more able children. The teachers employ a wide range of effective teaching approaches which are tailored appropriately to the children's various learning styles, and match well the resources and materials to their interests. They use a range of questioning techniques effectively to extend the children's thinking skills and to develop their reflection on their learning. The teachers are ably supported in their work by the skill and commitment of the classroom assistants.

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\* The key stage outcomes should be interpreted with caution for small primary schools as a large percentage change from year to year can often be attributed to a very small number of children.

- Throughout the school, the teachers promote a literacy rich environment which is enhanced by appropriate resources and colourful displays incorporating examples of the children's written work. The breadth of experiences and well-structured lessons ensure variety, continuity and progression in the children's language and learning and provide good opportunities for the development of self-management skills.
- The children's mathematical experiences develop systematically across the three key stages. The teachers focus appropriately on the development of the children's mental mathematics approaches, build on their prior knowledge and provide clear explanations of the mathematical concepts. In addition, they develop effectively the children's capacity to use mathematical language accurately and facilitate the children's purposeful engagement with others to complete appropriate problem-solving and practical activities. The children's knowledge of place value needs to be consolidated further in the mathematics activities in the foundation stage and KS 1.
- The quality of the arrangements for pastoral care is outstanding. This is evident through: the positive working relationships at all levels; the nurturing environment within the school; the very good behaviour of the children; the mutual respect and the inclusive practices that exist among all members of the school community. In almost all cases, the staff provides the children with verbal and written feedback that is supportive, affirming and designed to develop their self-esteem. The well-established school council system and the Eco-council provide the children with very good opportunities through which to present their views on the life of the school and to become active participants in improving aspects of the provision.
- The quality of provision for those children who require additional support is very good. Their needs are met through highly effective in-class differentiation, by the provision of individual education plans with clear targets and focused strategies and by the appropriate use of classroom assistants to support learning.
- The school gives good attention to promoting healthy eating and physical activity. The staff encourages the children to adopt healthy lifestyles through the healthy break scheme and there are regular opportunities for the children to engage in a wide range of outdoor play and sporting activities.

## 5. Leadership and management

**The quality of leadership and management is very good.**

- An effective culture of self-evaluation has been established throughout the school. A collegial approach to school development planning ensures that all members of staff are involved in the improvements of the provision and the standards attained by the children. The school's well-constructed School Development Plan (SDP) and the focused action plans are informed by the effective analysis and use made of a good range of the school's performance data. The teaching Principal combines most effectively the teaching and

leadership roles; she sets high expectations for the quality of the teaching and the learning and has a clear agenda for school improvement. The co-ordinators provide very good curricular leadership; they evaluate the quality of the classroom practice and provide appropriate staff development to their colleagues to ensure a high quality of professional practice in the school.

- There are appropriate procedures in place to keep the parents well informed about their children’s progress; these include written reports and formal parent-teacher consultations in line with the statutory regulations. In addition, the parents can arrange to meet with the teachers as the need arises. The primary school maintains good links with local churches, charities and external agencies.
- The governors are supportive of the life and work of the school. They implement well the key governance roles to ensure that the school provides a high quality of educational provision.
- On the basis of the evidence available at the time of the inspection, the school has comprehensive arrangements in place for safeguarding children. These arrangements reflect the guidance issued by the relevant Department. In discussions with a group of year 6 children, they indicated that they feel happy in school; they enjoy the range of the extra-curricular activities and appreciate how all staff care for and support them. The children know who to speak to if they have concerns about their well-being.

## CONCLUSION

In the areas inspected, the quality of education provided by this school is very good. The school is meeting very effectively the educational and pastoral needs of the children; and has demonstrated its capacity for sustained self-improvement.

### 6. Summary of questionnaire responses

PARENTAL QUESTIONNAIRES	
Number of Questionnaires Issued to the school	99
Number of Questionnaires Returned	46
Percentage of Returns	46%
Number of Comments	20

The majority of the responses from the parental questionnaires indicated a high level of satisfaction with the provision in the school. In particular, the parents acknowledged the high level of professional commitment of all staff and the supportive learning environment for the children. The small number of concerns raised in the written comments has been discussed with the governors and the Principal.

In discussions with the governors, they expressed their appreciation of the work of the school, the commitment of all the staff to the children and the leadership provided by the Principal. They acknowledged the importance of the school's participation in the events of the local village and in the rural community. They also expressed a concern about the number of classrooms. The issue is listed in Appendix 1.

TEACHERS QUESTIONNAIRES	
Number of Questionnaires Returned	7
Number of Comments	1

SUPPORT STAFF QUESTIONNAIRES	
Number of Questionnaires Returned	8
Number of Comments	2

All of the teachers and most of the support staff completed the questionnaire. The staff indicated that they work well as a team; almost all indicate that they are fully involved with the school development planning process and feel that their contributions are valued.

**ACCOMMODATION**

- The accommodation provision for the year 7 children is inappropriate and needs to be improved urgently.



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